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Estate Landscapes in northern Europe

an introduction

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This volume represents the first transnational exploration of the estate landscape in northern Europe. It brings together experts from six countries to explore the character, role and significance of the estate over five hundred years during which the modern landscape took shape. They do so from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, to provide the first critical study of the estate as a distinct cultural landscape. The northern European countries discussed in this volume – Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Britain – have a fascinating and deep shared history of cultural, economic and social exchange and dialogue. Whilst not always a family at peace, they can lay claim to having forged many key aspects of the modern world, including commercial capitalism and industrialization from an overwhelmingly rural base in the early modern period. United around the North Sea, the region was a gateway to the east through the Baltic Sea, and across the Atlantic to the New World in the west. Thus the region holds a strong appeal for scholars in the period after the European reformations, with recent historiography recognizing the benefit of transnational histories, which draw out the similarities and distinctions between the historical trajectories of the various provinces.[1]

The current study takes as its starting point the centrality of the estate landscape – often referred to as the manorial landscape in a continental context – within a nexus of rural relationships and as the agent behind the creation of distinct cultural landscapes throughout northern Europe. One of the many apparent commonalities across the region considered here is the role of the major landowner, and the social significance of the large house and its offices, which served as a home of social distinction, a centre of hospitality, and an economic hub, as well as an arena for local

Harewood House, West Yorkshire, UK *Harewood House was built between 1758 and 1771 for Edwin Lascelles, whose family made their fortune in the West Indies. The parkland was laid out over the same period by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and epitomizes the late-eighteenth century taste for a more informal naturalistic landscape. Small enclosed fields from the seventeenth century were replaced by parkland that could be grazed, just as it is today, although some hedgerow trees were retained to add interest within the park, such as those in the foreground. By the early-nineteenth century all arable cultivation had been removed from the view of the house, which was screened by extensive perimeter plantations. (Photo: Jonathan Finch)*

government and jurisdiction. The presence of such a social and economic institution can be seen to create a distinct cultural landscape, made up of the demesne or "home" farm, tenanted holdings, forestry or woodland, and settlements which might share a common architectural grammar.

The landscape of northern Europe was structured by patterns of landownership that evolved from medieval roots into the post-medieval period, and both the process of evolution and the resulting landscape character differed dramatically across northern Europe, despite sharing fundamental similarities. One of the most significant agents which determined the character and structure of landholding across the region was the landed estate – a complex of rural property forming an administrative unity and held by one owner who exercised control over resources and rights across that landscape and benefitted from the associated privileges. Much of the research undertaken on the region relates to the agrarian economy of specific countries, which was dominated by agricultural production well into the nineteenth century, despite early commercial and industrial developments during the late-medieval and early-modern periods. The history of rural life has focused on agricultural regimes and their associated social structures, with the transition from a feudal or seigneurial system to modern market economies being a key concern.[2]

The preference for translating national terms – such as *herregård*, Gut or *landgoed* – into the English "manor house" (as opposed to "country house" as used in Britain for the post-medieval period), marks a notable distinction between British and continental experiences, and highlights an important difference. Across the northern German territories, Scandinavia, and into the Baltic region, manorial land was distinguished from around the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries by its exemption from taxes and other associated privileges.[3] The nomenclature of, for instance, *herregård*, was thus used historically in those regions to signify, preserve, and defend the financial and tax privileges that pertained to the landscape and which conferred status upon the owner. In Britain, and more specifically in England, manorial privileges had been steadily eroded since the mid-fourteenth century, and the few that survived were abolished in the 1660s as part of the renegotiation of the relationship between crown and parliament in the wake of the restoration of the monarchy after the civil wars of the 1640s. By the early-eighteenth century, when there was a wave of building and of rebuilding elite residences, the medieval nomenclature of the manor was gradually erased.[4]

The chapters in this volume will use English terms to explain nationally specific circumstances. As the histories and meanings of key terms vary between the six countries covered, however, the national term for "manor", "country house" and "estate" will also be given to avoid confusion through translation. "Nobility" and "aristocracy" are also sometimes used differently across the region. In a British context, the nobility refers only to peers and the immediate families of hereditary peers, whereas "aristocracy" encompasses the peerage, junior descendants in the male line, and non-hereditary titles such as baronet and knight. Below them were the gentry, who were untitled. On the continent, however, the terms are used differently. In Scandinavia, "aristocracy" is the term used to describe the most powerful families at the very top of the elite, whilst "nobility" signifies a wider group encompassing the titled aristocracy of counts and barons, as well as the untitled majority of the *adel* (nobility), who shared hereditary privileges through forms of partible inheritance. The root of this difference lies in the inheritance systems: in Britain, primogeniture restricted the title and the bulk of the landed inheritance to the singular male head of families, whereas across much of continental northern Europe, forms of partible inheritance meant that these privileges and resources were held by all members of noble families.

This complex mosaic of rights and practices was written into the landscape, and means that it is important to identify notable national and regional similarities and differences across the five hundred-year time span covered by the chapters. An overview of the two main forms of demesne economies is followed by a brief description of developments in landownership and inheritance regulations after 1500, as these are fundamental to the manorial system and the role of estates across northern Europe.

Structuring the landscape: Demesne economy, *Gutsherrschaft* and *Grundherrschaft*

Landowners in northern Europe held feudal responsibilities that were rooted in medieval estate management. These included rights held over land and tenants, and manorial rights such as that to collect quit-rents, fees for renewing a tenancy, and fines from court cases. In medieval England the term "manor" referred to the lord's demesne and the land worked by tenants, the lord's jurisdiction exercised through a court which regulated

labour services – known as corvée on the continent – and involved oversight of the local community, as well as the lands and tenure of the villeins or peasants.[5] Parallels to these rights are found across northern Europe, leading to the choice of "manor" and "manorial" to describe the agrarian landscape. However, the relationships between lord, tenants and peasants differed within the manorial systems that developed in different parts of northern Europe, and those relationships changed over time.

Historians have attempted to map the broad regions where different forms of manorialism evolved over the late- and post-medieval periods. The *Gutsherrschaft* and *Grundherrschaft* model, for example, was first pioneered by the German historian F. G. Knapp, and forms the classical framework for understanding the manorial regimes of early-modern estates in northern and eastern Europe. *Gutsherrschaft* and *Grundherrschaft* categorize estate economies based on the relationship between the corvée, or unpaid labour service performed by tenants on demesne land, and the annual rent paid by tenants. In areas with *Gutsherrschaft* (*Gut*: "demesne"), farming the demesne land was given precedence over tenanted land within the manorial economy, whereas estates with *Grundherrschaft* (*Grund*: "land"), placed emphasis on rental income from tenants over a reliance on unpaid labour services.[6] In the classical understanding of the two concepts, *Gutsherrschaft* was the model followed on estates in eastern Europe, with a strong determination to maintain an unfree peasant workforce, while *Grundherrschaft* prevailed in western Europe, with an emphasis on rental income. However, as Kirsten Sundberg has recently argued for Scandinavia and the Baltic area, the realities of demesne economy, and thus the landscape created on estates across northern Europe, was much more varied and complicated than a simple east/west dichotomy implies. Most estates were in fact managed by a mixture of the two regimes, locating them on the continuum between *Gutsherrschaft* and *Grundherrschaft*. However, the picture is further complicated by the fact that the model does not map convincingly onto developments in England, the Netherlands or northern France.[7]

In eastern Europe, including eastern German and Baltic states such as Mecklenburg and Prussia, where a high proportion of land was owned by the nobility, manorial rights and responsibilities grew over the late-medieval and early-modern period, so that *Gutsherrschaft* was the more pronounced form of demesne economy.[8] In Scandinavia, however, organizing an estate around a demesne or capital farm also became the model followed by noble landlords during the sixteenth century, but *Gutsherrschaft* and the

use of unpaid labour services was less pronounced and much weaker than in the Baltic area. Two key tenets of feudalism – feudal tenures and personal servile status – were both in decline in England from the period immediately after the Black Death in the mid-fourteenth century.[9] The weakening of feudal relationships binding the aristocracy to the crown was paralleled by a decline in manorial relationships between local lords and peasants. The demesne was often rented out, as there were no economic or

1.1 | The northern European region *covered in this volume, with the key sites referred to in the chapters.*

fiscal advantages to retaining it in hand as was the case on the continent. By the end of the sixteenth century, the manor's legal functions had largely been moved to other institutions such as the parish. Although it retained some sense of identity as a unit of sale and purchase, the manor came to be defined solely by the right to hold a court, although its remit was limited to local administration and petty crimes. The remaining feudal rights or "incidents" were abolished on the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, and although vestiges of the manorial system survived into the eighteenth century, they held little power, prestige or privilege.[10] A similar situation developed in southern and western parts of Germany, where some feudal institutions survived at least in name, but in a severely weakened form. Over the same period landownership accrued status as a qualification for political and judicial roles of state, as well as being a secure form of investment, augmented by rental income from tenants, and so remained a critical determinant of elite status.

Nobility and Inheritance

The early-sixteenth century saw a series of religious reformations and political changes across northern Europe which initiated realignments and shifts in power, leading to radical changes of government in some places over the seventeenth century, which inevitably had an impact on the landed elite. The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) wrought havoc on the continent, particularly in the German territories, and it was followed by wars within Scandinavia. Britain also entered a new political situation after the strife of the English Civil Wars (1642-1651), the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, and the subsequent "Glorious Revolution" of 1689 which saw the protestant House of Orange ascend to the throne. However, both the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution enshrined the importance of property and secured the position of the landowning class as independent from royal power. As the link between landownership and political power became more closely articulated and distanced from the crown, a raft of legal and economic measures was developed which acted to keep patrimonial assets together as a coherent and sustainable entity. This was a very different development to that of the Danish and German territories, where the landowning nobility was weakened after the wars of the seventeenth century, and in the Danish case, where they were weakened after the king's assumption of absolutist power in the 1660s.

The political and societal reforms occasioned by the reformations of the 1530s brought new practices of inheritance law to Denmark and Norway; these decreed that members of the nobility could no longer marry non-nobles, and that new ennoblements were linked exclusively to military success. This resulted in a decline of numbers among the Danish and Norwegian nobility during the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century, but they were able to increase their influence, as certain high-ranking administrative posts could only be filled by members of the nobility. The Thirty Years' War affected the economies of both Sweden-Finland and Denmark-Norway, but the two states responded with different strategies relating to the nobility. In Sweden the "Great Reduction" of 1683 saw the nobility reduced in number and some of the land previously donated to them by the crown reclaimed, reducing the share of land owned by nobles and their relative power. In Denmark, however, after the Danish king assumed absolutist power in 1660, the crown gave land to the nobles in order to pay off its war debts, thus increasing the share of land owned by the Danish nobility, although the crown retained more power as an absolutist monarchy.[11] It is clear that the renegotiation of power between monarchs, nobility and freeholders over the early-modern period had considerable ramifications for the size and power of elites, the structure of landownership, and the significance of the estate landscape at the beginning of the modern era.

In Sweden, the ranks of the nobility expanded in the seventeenth century, from around 450 males in 1600 to around 2,500 by 1700. The crown donated land to new members of the Swedish nobility, and Sweden's position as a great power in the Baltic area also created roles for administrators, which proved to be remunerative positions for many noble families. The result was a flourishing nobility with strong links to the administration of the state, who were also owners of small rural estates. The rise in numbers amongst the Swedish nobility contrasted with the relatively constant number of Danish manor owners (*herremænd*), whose numbers were roughly equivalent to those in Sweden at the end of the sixteenth century, but had not increased by the 1680s. Within this burgeoning group, however, a fraction of the nobility, dominated by members of the Swedish royal Council of the Realm and by members of established noble families, continued to hold large estates.[12] This small elite, consisting of just 5% of the nobility, owned the majority of the land, while 95% of the nobility lived on small estates.

Inheritance law and tradition impacted on the size of estates, and thus the character of the landscape they created. In areas of partible inheritance, large landowners had to divide their estates to create holdings for their offspring, whereas in regions where primogeniture was prevalent, the eldest son would inherit the estate intact, albeit encumbered with responsibilities and provisions for other family members. Differences in inheritance law and practice can be seen in the distinct manorial landscapes that developed from the sixteenth century. Three very basic models can be distinguished within the northern European region – in the Scandinavian countries land was shared between all offspring; in the northern Germanic regions the land was shared between all sons; and finally, Britain followed a system of primogeniture, where only the eldest son inherited. However, these models should be taken only as archetypes that were subject to local variation and change over time.

In England, despite primogeniture protecting the patrimonial lands, a form of entail called "strict settlement" was devised in the late-seventeenth century which made the landowner's heir a tenant for life and settled the estate on trustees for the "contingent remainders" – in most cases the heir's first son. The system preserved the family estate intact by preventing it from being alienated at will and strengthened the principles of primogeniture, whilst providing separately for daughters and younger sons. It was rapidly adopted amongst landed families after the Restoration in 1660 and marked a major step towards securing the prominence and growth of the estate within the modern landscape.[13] A similar development was evident in northern Germany and Scandinavia, where many large estates were entailed in *fideikommisse* over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, thus also strengthening primogeniture in these areas, but elsewhere in the region variations in practice were apparent. Although entails grew more popular during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in south-western Germany, for instance, local inheritance traditions continued to make it difficult for property owners to keep estates as large cohesive units.

Just as inheritance practices could fracture landholding at each generation, so estates could be brought together by judicious marriage alliances. In regions of primogeniture, marriage to an eldest son could bring substantial territorial expansion or strategic enlargement of the local estate through marriage to a neighbour, something that was evident amongst English landowners.[14] In the case of the Netherlands a strong preference for marriages between noble families combined with the lack of new en-

noblements and demographic decline reduced the group significantly, although the remaining core families grew very wealthy. In Scandinavian and Nordic regions with forms of partible inheritance, the landscape was in continual dynamic change, as holdings were shared between each generation, and gathered together again in new but often smaller constellations through marriage. Such eternal dynamism led to considerable and regular fluctuations in a family's wealth and status.

It is therefore difficult to generalize about the fortunes of the landed elite across northern Europe over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In some areas alliances through advantageous marriages, together with strict settlement, served to consolidate and enlarge the holdings of wealthy families. A greater reliance on mortgages also granted flexibility in financial affairs; however, the underlying financial wherewithal to invest in land was equally important for the growth and sustenance of estates.[15] Elsewhere, however, traditions of partible inheritance could compromise the integrity of estates across generations, and the relationship with the monarchy as a source of power could work both for and against the consolidation of landholding into the hands of the few. Where noble privilege was inherited across the family, or where the monarch allied with freeholders in parliament against the power of the nobility, as was the case in Denmark, landholding could be fragmented. However, the expression of social distinction through the ownership of land, through the management of estate land, and the way of life performed within the landscape, as well as through its architectural expression, were all shared attributes across northern Europe.

The Challenge of Urban Commerce

The creation of estates across northern Europe was contemporaneous with the growth of colonialism, early industrialization and the development of global trade. New streams of commodities fed the consumer revolution, and wealth flowed into the banking and commercial sectors as well as through the government and state. New avenues and opportunities for personal enrichment opened up and, by the eighteenth century, an entirely new scale of private wealth was apparent, particularly in Britain and the Netherlands, and to some degree in Sweden and Denmark.[16] In the eighteenth century, the cultural representation of landownership as the foundation of modern society remained a strong justification for the privileged political position

held by landowners, and it was also used to justify the expanding reach of colonialism in the New World in the latter half of the century.[17]

In the Dutch case, early development towards a highly urbanized society influenced the estate landscape in a variety of ways. Around 1650, for example, the noble families of Holland still owned almost 60% of the manors in the region. However, urban merchants had grown rapidly in wealth and power over the first half of the century to become an important group of new owners in the manorial landscape. Nevertheless, the Dutch nobility remained powerful members of the landowning elite, exerting considerable influence over the wider landscape in many regions, as the urban elite were less involved in estate management and agriculture, preferring instead to use their country houses as the focus of a leisured lifestyle, including connoisseurship and entertaining.

The growing urban elite dominated the Dutch sea provinces, where they bought, built, and owned most of the country houses and led an elegant lifestyle comparable to that of the noble titled elite. As their main focus remained on urban life, where commerce and public office remained the routes to wealth, the role of the country house became largely that of a summer residence, with the rural setting providing an Arcadian contrast to life in the town. Urban owners had little need for substantial rural estates, with all the responsibilities they brought, or the income they provided. Elsewhere in the Netherlands, however, in the south and east, where estate owners were predominantly established noble families, the manorial tradition was maintained in a form close to other European feudal estate economies.[18]

The urbanized Dutch social landscape was mirrored to some extent in England, where the town and country house were fashioned in opposition to each other from the late 1690s, as the annual parliamentary sessions and terms of the law courts created a London "season".[19] In the face of increasing industrialization and commercialism in the economy during the later eighteenth century, models that drew a virtuous link between landownership and political power were deployed. Drawing on classical Georgic traditions, it was argued that property and landownership granted autonomy from "interest of rural poetry" – such as manufacturing – which was deemed a necessary prerequisite for developing virtue as an actor or agent within the political, social and natural realms.[20]

The landscape became both an analogue for personal and social values and a political lesson, with the beauty and order of nature providing a pattern for exemplary social behaviour.[21] Crucially, the landscape depicted

in these poetic images, and latterly in portraits of the landed gentry and their families, was not detached from the political world. In Britain these cultural expressions were used to legitimate and naturalize the economic and legal shift from the medieval landscape in which landownership was associated with complex and dispersed manorial rights and obligations, to one of moral governance based on the virtues of personal or private landownership.[22]

Elsewhere in continental Europe, several waves of reform from the late-eighteenth to the late-nineteenth century gradually changed the estate landscape from manorial economies, based on the relationship between demesne farming and dependent tenanted farms, towards large-scale farming and wage labour. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Scandinavian estate landscapes were still characterized by the manorial demesne and associated tenant farms. However, as urbanization began to have an impact on the rural workforce in Denmark, a period of stricter *Gutsherrschaft* was ushered in with the introduction of adscription (*stavnsbånd*) in 1733, which tied all male peasant farmers of working age to their land in an effort to stem rural-urban migration.[23] To allow for the freer movement of peasants, adscription was abolished during the reforms of 1788, and the expansion of demesne land through the eviction of tenants was prohibited in 1789 (and in Schleswig-Holstein from 1805) further weakening the hand of the manorial landowner. This series of radical reforms encouraged peasants to purchase land, but also changed the face of the Danish estate landscape. Tenants had typically hitherto farmed dispersed strips in open communal fields around the village, but increasingly consolidated owner-occupied farms were created away from the village within new enclosed fields. Many estates sold parcels of previously tenanted land to freeholders, establishing a new landscape of smallholder farms. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the remaining estate core was focused increasingly on more efficient large-scale farming, forestry, and, to some degree, on rural industries. The end of manorial privilege was marked in 1850 when demesne land finally lost its tax-exempt status.[24]

Until the end of the eighteenth century, large noble landowners were still dominant in southern Sweden, as they were in other Scandinavian regions, including eastern Denmark, with which it shared many characteristics.[25] During the final decades of the eighteenth century, many estates in Sweden expanded the size of the demesne land, whilst reducing the number of tenant farms. However, new laws were passed in 1789 and 1810

that eased restrictions on the purchase of manorial land, which had previously been tax-exempt and reserved for the established nobility, offering non-nobles (*ofrälse ståndspersoner*) the opportunity to buy land and even purchase large estates. During the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, large amounts of land were bought by non-noble members of the elite, and many private landowners – noble as well as non-noble persons of rank – developed ironworks and industrial enterprises, and controlled large areas of land through these businesses.[26] Swedish landowners were encouraged to sell their land, and the Swedish crown in particular sold off its land to freeholders, leading to a dramatic increase in the number of freeholders at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[27] In Norway, both estate owners and the crown began selling off land to small farmers much earlier, – before 1700 – and by around 1750 the majority of land was held by small freeholders (*Odelsbonde*).[28] Corvée was gradually phased out in the first half of the nineteenth century for tenant farmers and crofters in many Scandinavian countries including Denmark and Sweden. It was at this time, and as a result of the redistribution of land, that the small freeholder (*Odelsbonden*) became an important symbol in the Norwegian nation-building project of the late-nineteenth century.[29] Inheritance laws, and particularly the strict entails that secured inheritance, continued to protect the estates of large landowners in Scandinavia throughout the nineteenth century, until the system of strict entails was dissolved in 1919 for Denmark, and in 1963 for Sweden.[30]

The political reorganization of central Europe in the wake of the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 signaled the beginning of the end for the *Grundherrschaft*-based estates system in south-western Germany, with feudal duties and payments being gradually phased out. The change from tenant to freehold ownership left estate owners with large areas of forest still in their control, but with very little agricultural land, and estates in this region did not re-establish their position as large-scale farms with a demesne economy in the nineteenth century. In contrast, on estates in eastern Germany, some tenant farmers were relieved of their tenancies and became freeholders, but the large demesnes continued to grow over the nineteenth century.[31]

In Britain during the eighteenth century, the pattern of landownership and landscape change diverged from the continental experience. The process of enclosing medieval open fields had been ongoing since the fifteenth century, but key peaks of activity in the 1780s and 1800s saw its fulfillment.[32]

Throughout the post-medieval period the decline of the small landowner was a constant theme, in no small part because of the pressure to enclose from large landowners, but the beneficiaries changed from the local gentry during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to large estate owners in the eighteenth. The rise of the gentry over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is evident in terms of numbers, wealth and the proportion of land that they held. From the 1680s, however, the rise of large estates became more apparent and land began to be concentrated in the hands of the very wealthy, as the economy slowed and taxes on land rose. Protected against economic vulnerability by the size of their holdings, the large landowners were often able to take advantage of other income streams, including government office.

The Estate Landscape c. 1720-1900

Estates have often been characterized using a "core and periphery" model, with the mansion or seat at the centre and with a variety of landscape types and features spread out around them. These features might include the gardens and park landscape around the house, with the kitchen garden and home or demesne farm forming the ornamental and productive core, beyond which the wider landscape of the estate with its farms, fields, forests and settlements formed the "outer penumbra".[33] This model has much to commend it, but perhaps overlooks the connections between elements within the estate, and the performative aspect of life on the estate in terms of the owner and the working population. Furthermore, the wider landscape also held conspicuous statements about estate identity, which were often placed on the boundaries or high points of an estate to alert the traveller or visitor that they were entering the landed domain of a particular family. These could range from large farms displaying the estate livery, milestones and sign-posts, as well as monumental commemorative landmarks.

The landscape character could also change within the estate. For example roads were more likely lined with trees, providing shade for the traveller and timber for the estate, whilst visibly distinguishing the estate landscape. In most Danish and Swedish cases, the manorial residence in the late-eighteenth century was still surrounded with enclosures that combined functional or productive purposes within the ornamental sphere. This had been the style of early-modern English estates, which physically demonstrated social distinction through the landowner's greater access

to a variety of resources. The landowner lived through the same seasonal cycle as his tenants, but was distinguished by a better and more varied diet. Dovecotes and fish ponds were displayed as badges of status, for example, and featured prominently in formal gardens; whilst orchards and nutteries were areas of quiet reflective retreat, as much as places for the production of fruit and nuts.[34]

The pace of landscape change on the English estate began to accelerate during the early-eighteenth century, with medieval halls increasingly replaced by new houses, often in the classical, Palladian style, financed by wealth accumulated through government office, commerce, early industrialization and colonial trade, in addition to rental income and other landed sources.[35] On the larger estates, the house articulated a message of grandeur and virtuous living through its scale, ambition and architecture. Changes were mirrored in the designed landscape, with a gradual change from formal geometric gardens to more naturalistic designs in the larger parks, often associated with the English landscaper and architect Lancelot "Capability" Brown (1716-1783).[36] Formal gardens were however notably retained around smaller properties into the third quarter of the eighteenth century. From the mid-eighteenth century, exclusion and segregation became increasingly apparent in the English landscape, with the larger houses famously isolated in a sea of grass, separated from the wider working landscape by extensive parkland and screened from view by perimeter plantations. In this landscape, the tenanted farms of the wider estate were distinct from the land kept in hand by the owner, including agricultural, woodland plantations and game coverts. The landscape of the estate might also include areas of industrial development or extractive industries, but these were usually leased out rather than directly managed. Some of the significance of this social change, and the growing sense of exclusivity at the heart of the estate, can perhaps be understood in terms of contemporary social developments in the eighteenth century. A growing gulf emerged between the landed gentry and the wider community, reflecting a society that was increasingly stratified horizontally by class, and increasingly divided between a consolidated and enlightened "polite" landowning elite and the rest of society. This vision of the landscaped estate inspired landowners throughout northern Europe from the late-eighteenth century, and the landscape garden gradually appeared on many European estates into the nineteenth century, commonly referred to as "English gardens".[37] Throughout the region, manorial seats were increasingly seen as country houses,

and were depicted as such in portraits, showing an idealized parkland, from which signs of labour had been removed to promote the classical pastoral landscape in natural harmony, with the enlightened landowner at its heart.

However, important differences can be discerned in the profile of the home farm between some countries; differences that articulate the underlying distinction of social relationships upon estates. The large home farm would, for example, still be located alongside the residence on estates in southern Sweden, Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein. Its location would thus emphasize and represent the manorial relationships associated with the manor, while it gave architectural expression to the scale of the enterprise compared to other smaller farms in the landscape. As well as the buildings, the landscape also articulated manorial power through distinctive large fields, and the presence of hedges, rather than simple tracks or headlands, to demarcate the field boundaries. The grand extent of the demesne farm was evident from the scale of the landscape elements and the character of the landscape itself: long, straight roads, large fields, hedges and fences – "great lines" – all marked out the demesne farm as the hub of the manorial economy. Even though many manors and country houses were refashioned in the nineteenth century, the owners often chose to retain the tradition of placing production and functional purposes in close proximity to the main building.[38]

In England, the home farm was placed at a discreet distance from the main house on large estates from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, as was the kitchen garden, which used the new technologies of heated walls and hot houses to overcome the limitations of the domestic climate. The home farm and the kitchen garden provided the household with food, but were not significant in terms of the tenurial privileges enjoyed by the landowner, and thus had a less important symbolic role within the landscape. They were however important enough to form part of the "polite tour" which guests would take around the grounds, as were the kennels where the estate hounds were kept ready for the hunt.[39] The right to hunt over the landscape was one of the lord or landowner's key privileges throughout northern Europe since medieval times, and so the appurtenances and trophies of the hunt – and latterly of shooting game – were conspicuously displayed. During the nineteenth century, the hunt grew as a practice of social distinction, demonstrating the status of estate owners, and their rights over the landscape, as well as providing the opportunity to display largesse and patronage to guests and tenants alike.[40]

In the most prominent northern European country houses and estates, many aspects of elite life were revitalized over the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, with new expressions of privilege and wealth, often fashioned for new owners that amplified the economic and political power they had represented for centuries. The developments of the estate landscape and landownership continued to be profitable in this period, and ensured the presence of a wealthy rural elite, who were the most significant employers in most rural areas. Landowners and their families increasingly divided their time between a rural summer season in their country houses, when they could entertain at home and partake of the privileges offered by their landholding, and a winter season – with the exception of hunting parties – in the city close to their social circles, and where legal and commercial matters could be dealt with.[41] After the First World War (1914-1918) and throughout the rest of the twentieth century, the significance of estates as powerful institutions in northern European societies weakened, alongside shifts that drove political and social change. Today, estates and country houses still represent a cultural heritage that is both contested and fascinating, has a profound and significant history, and has an enduring influence on the character of the European cultural landscape. The chapters of this book set out to explore important similarities and variations in the manorial histories that have formed the northern European landscape over the last five hundred years, and initiate new avenues of research into the forces that shaped the northern European landscape in the modern period.

Chapter overview

In a wide-ranging introduction to the cultural landscape of Danish estates, Mikkel Venborg Pedersen outlines how the approach to their study should recognize the reciprocal relationship between the manor and the landscape, and between the various social dynamics at work within that landscape. He argues that the various overlaying and interconnected roles of the estate as an institution – as an economic force, as a realization of social privilege, and as a seat of jurisdiction – can be represented through power, grace, and authority. These were of course contested roles within the landscape; they were at the very least viewed from different perspectives by individuals and groups at different points in the rural social hierarchy. They were also elements that evolved over time as political events, such as the agricultural

reforms in 1788, impacted the social geography of the region. Yet the distinct landscape of the *herregård* persisted, preserving natural elements of the ancient landscape such as ponds and trees, which had accumulated social significance in folklore, as well as the ancient burial mounds and standing stones of the medieval past. Alongside these symbols of the past was the modern landscape of large enclosed fields, isolated farms away from the village centre, and modern farm buildings. Scale remained a differentiating feature in most aspects of agrarian life on the estate, even if only in relative terms. Venborg Pedersen draws out a strong sense of performance within the landscape, as exemplified by hunting, which brought together conflicting priorities within the forest, in a quintessential element of the Danish estate landscape.

In contrast to this broad survey of the Danish manorial landscape, Jonathan Finch analyses the first attempt to quantify landownership in modern Britain – the "New Domesday" – which was compiled in the 1870s and was published in a definitive edition by John Bateman in the 1880s in an effort to pacify the growing agitation for parliamentary reform which sought to loosen the grip of the landed elite on the levers of power. Despite the government's original assertion that ownership was widespread across a broad section of society, the survey revealed that more than half of England was held in estates of over 1,000 acres (*c.* 405 hectares). The dataset collected in the nineteenth century has formed the basis for many historical studies ever since, yet attention has rarely focused on what it can contribute to our understanding of the estate landscape. Finch looks at county case studies to demonstrate how and why the profile of landholding differed over time and space. The largest estates of the "territorial magnates" tended to be established on the poorer and lighter soils by the end of the eighteenth century, in areas where land was relatively cheap, and where the scope for schemes of improvement through enclosure was greatest. Although not necessarily innovators, the large estates achieved the greatest extent of landscape change. The impact of the estates on the wider population is also considered in sections on settlement and farm size in the late nineteenth century.

The social and economic features of the estate landscape are discussed by Göran Ulväng in a chapter that draws on a database of Swedish manors. Although focused on the question of whether Swedish estates declined between the latter half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the chapter also articulates a detailed breakdown of

the characteristic elements across regions in Sweden in relation to manorial production and ownership. Ulväng identifies key landscape elements which define the importance of the manor and create its distinctive cultural landscape. These features are then explored in six of the country's regions, examining the profile of ownership and the value attached to different aspects of the estate economy. Having defined a broad range of agrarian, economic and social variables, changes in these variables are then explored over time. The rise of the non-noble owner is a recurrent theme here and in other chapters, yet there were discernible areas – just as in Britain – where the titled nobility held on to power and economic resources. Ulväng argues that the tenacity and continuity of the nobility was most apparent not in economic supremacy, but in the maintenance of a way of life and a landscape form that was intended to be read as one linked to ancient privilege.

Carsten Porskrog Rasmussen explores the fascinating landscapes associated with the "dukeries" of Schleswig-Holstein, an area famously disputed between Denmark and its increasingly influential neighbour Germany to the south. By exploring the peculiarities of, and similarities between, the large estates (or miniature duchies) held by ducal branches of the royal line, Porskrog Rasmussen is able to shed light on adjacent landscapes to the north in southern Denmark and to the south in northern Germany, and to investigate the reasons behind key similarities and differences. His foci are the demesne economy and the role of the capital farm, the legal and administrative roles of the manor, the composition and status of the peasant populations and the impact of serfdom and tenure on those communities, the differences between the operation of large and small manors, and finally the importance of the lordly residence. The form of the farm buildings proves to be a point of distinction, following Danish conventions in some examples, Germanic in others; the differences, Porskrog Rasmussen argues, inform us about issues of status within the landscape, as does, for example, the form and composition of the villages associated with the residences. Capital farms also played a key role in the landscapes of the dukeries and retained a residential element for the lord until the second quarter of the eighteenth century, when such farms began to be increasingly occupied by tenant farmers instead. Again, the scale of the capital farms associated with the dukeries separated them from the peasant farms and their landscapes, as did the attached fields. Porskrog Rasmussen makes the case that by separating out the basic functions of a *herregård* as those

of residence, farming and lordship, we can enhance our understanding of how they were integrated in a number of regional contexts. The comparative approach, he concludes, can help identify characteristics of models which would otherwise be easily overlooked, when they are so obvious in a Danish or German context.

Daniel Menning addresses the estate in the southwest of present-day Germany – specifically Baden and Wurttemberg. Although this region has been largely excluded from a German historiography which focused on the narrative of national unification and the role of the nobility, he argues that despite being a region that was relatively free from noble control, it still has an important role to play in understanding the shifting relationship between the landed elite and the wider population. Menning crafts a detailed picture of how inheritance practices fragmented ownership and incomes, creating principalities based in some cases on just a few villages. The influence of transnational continental empires such as the Holy Roman Empire and that latterly created by Napoleon all had their impact on the local balance of power. However, on the ground, revolution and war created opportunities for the wider rural population to question the remnants of the feudal system, and the abolition of feudalism in the mid-nineteenth century also affected the way in which estates were administered, as well as how they were worked on the ground. Menning emphasizes how political change on a continental level translated into the negotiation of power on the local level.

The situation in the Netherlands is perhaps unique among the continental nations, with high population levels and an early shift towards urbanization and engagement with a global market. Yme Kuiper builds on recent revisionist histories which seek to re-examine the role of urban entrepôts such as Amsterdam, and urbanism more generally, on the rural hinterland after the Golden Age during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries – a period which did much to shape the modern landscape in the seven provinces. The shifting balance of landownership and power between noble families and urban elites was a major factor in determining the character of rural development throughout the Netherlands during this period. Kuiper outlines the subtle relationship between the development of Dutch Arcadian landscapes and the flourishing school of landscape artists, and how this too captured the rural and urban power bases. Such was the distinct nature of Dutch society and landscape that the terms used for the buildings and the scale of the landholding were very different

to those seen both in Britain and the rest of northern Europe, making this an important study with which to question assumptions about the role and purpose of the house and estate.

The role of the estate in the complex relationships between emerging nations is captured by Arne Bugge Amundsen in his portrait of Norwegian estate landscapes. Amundsen's theme is the impact of religious reform and the domination of the country by Denmark in the early modern period. The dissolution of the three Scandinavian kingdoms, which had been united since the end of the fourteenth century, came at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when religious differences were accentuated and the imposition of Danish Lutheranism over a catholic-inclined Norway provided the context for Danish appropriation of land within Norway. Natural timber and iron resources attracted the attention of bourgeois investors, whilst the remaining Norwegian nobility were found on modest agricultural estates. With the abolition of hereditary noble titles and privileges in 1821, the nineteenth-century fate of the Norwegian manor houses and estates was varied and diverse, yet they still played an important role in the subsequent definition of the Norwegian nation state and a reawakening of Norwegian nationalism.

Together these chapters provide a varied insight into estate landscapes and the manorial legacy across northern Europe based on current research projects across six modern nations. By bringing together research which has previously been largely limited to the confines of national boundaries, it offers new insights into the significance of northern European estate landscapes for the first time, and the opportunity to identify key areas of divergence and convergence within the historic landscape. Significantly, it also illuminates the way forward in terms of profitable areas for future collaborative research.

Notes

1 For example van Bavel, B. and R. Hoyle (eds), *Social Relations: Property and Power*, Turnhout. 2010.

2 See for example, Aston, T.H. and C.H.E. Philpin (eds), *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe*, Cambridge. 1985.

3 Rasmussen, Carsten Porskrog, "Manors and States: The Distribution and Structure of Private Manors in Early Modern Scandinavia and their Relation to State Policies", in: *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 66:2, 2018.

4 Wilson, Richard and Mackley, Alan, *Creating Paradise: The Building of the English Country House 1660-1800*, London. 2000.

5 Robinson, John M., *The English Country Estate*, London. 1988, pp. 11-27.

6 Henningsen, Peter, review of Kirsten Sundberg, *Stat, stormakt och säterier: Agrarekonomisk utveckling och social integration i Östersöområdet 1500-1800*, Lund. 2001, in: *Historisk Tidsskrift* 104:1, pp. 273-77.

7 Sundberg, Kirsten, *Stat, stormakt och säterier: Agrarekonomisk utveckling och social integration i Östersöområdet 1500-1800*, Lund. 2001, p. 20.

8 Rasmussen 2018, "Manors and States", p. 203.

9 Bailey, Mark, *The Decline of Serfdom in Late Medieval England: From Bondage to Freedom*, Woodbridge. 2014, p. 306.

10 Bailey, Mark, *The English Manor c. 1200-c. 1500*, Manchester. 2002, p. 17; Waddell, Brodie "Governing England through the Manor Courts 1550-1850" in: *The Historical Journal* 55:2 2012, pp. 279-315.

11 Rasmussen 2018, "Manors and States", 205-07. Erichsen, John and Venborg Pedersen, Mikkel, 2015, *The Danish Country House*, Copenhagen. 2015, p. 52.

12 Rasmussen 2018, "Manors and States", p. 205.

13 Habakkuk, John, *Marriage, Debt, and the Estates System: English Landownership 1650–1950*, Oxford. 1994; Robinson 1988, The English Country Estate.

14 Lemmings, David, "Marriage and the Law in the Eighteenth Century: Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753" in: *The Historical Journal* 39:2, 1996, pp. 339-60; Habbakuk 1994, *Marriage, Debt*.

15 Habakkuk 1994, *Marriage, Debt*.

16 Bregnsbo, Brimnes, Henningsen: *Danmark og kolonierne*, vol. 1, Copenhagen. 2017.

17 Pocock, J. G. A., "The Mobility of Property and the Rise of Eighteenth Century Sociology", in: *Virtue, Commerce and History: Essays on Political Thought and History*, Cambridge. 1985, pp. 103-24.

18 Van Bavel and Hoyle 2010, *Social Relations*, p. 199.

19 Turner, James, *The Politics of Landscape: Rural Scenery and Society in English Poetry 1630-1660* Harvard. 1979.

20 Turner 1979, *The Politics of Landscape*.

21 Turner 1979, *The Politics of Landscape*, pp. 6-7; 38-39.

22 Pocock 1985, "The Mobility of Property".

23 In 1733, the age bracket was 14-36 years but this was subsequently extended and by 1764 it was 4-40 years. Løgstrup, Birgit, *Bondens frisættelse*, Copenhagen. 2015.

24 Van Bavel and Hoyle 2010, *Social Relations*, p. 326; Løgstrup 2015, *Bondens frisættelse*, p. 533.

25 Van Bavel and Hoyle 2010, *Social Relations*, p. 324.

26 Göran Ulväng, "Betydelsen av att äga en herrgård", in: *Historisk Tidsskrift för Finland*, 2013:2, pp. 289-90.

27 Van Bavel and Hoyle 2010, *Social Relations*, p. 315. Ulväng 2013, "Betydelsen av att äga en herrgård", p. 287.

28 Andreas Holmsen, "The transition from tenancy to freehold peasant ownership in Norway", in: *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 1961, 9:2, p. 152.

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38 Ulrich Lange, *Ekonomibygnader på skånska herrgårdar*, Stockholm. 2008, pp. 137ff.

39 Erichsen, John and Venborg Pedersen, Mikkel, *The Danish Country House*, Copenhagen. 2015, 190; Laursen, Jesper, *Herregårdsjagt i Danmark*, Aarhus. 2009.

40 Venborg Pedersen, Mikkel, "Cultural Landscapes: Spatial Aspects of Power and Authority in the Duchy of Augustenborg", in: *Ethnologia Europaea*, 31:1 2004, pp. 5-20; Finch, Jonathan, "Grass, Grass, Grass: Hunting and the Creation of the Modern Landscape" in: *Landscapes*, 5:2. 2004, pp. 41-51.

41 Girouard, Mark, *Life in the English Country House*, London. 1978, p. 299.

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